

MAY 25, 1978

Big rains have hit the Shortgrass Country. Some outposts have received as much as 4 inches. Measurements weren't that high at the ranch but we led the county in lightning and hail damage.

Reports sound like we've won an intermission from the drouth. Over 20,000 head of cattle were sold in the past two weeks in San Angelo. If it'll just stay green long enough for the truckers and the auction hands to get a rest, we'll be ahead. As it was, it was looking like the next thing the government needed to send was an emergency unit of trained auctioneers to relieve the pressure from the forced stampede to the markets.

Unlike the dry calamity of the 50's, this drouth didn't seem to bother the herders much. After the cow wreck in '73 wiped away everything but the Roman numerals carved on the sundial at the courthouse, no one showed any emotion. Few of the jugkeepers flinched as the seasons declined. I heard only a few sniffles at mail call on the days when the feed companies billed. All in all, it was a calm drouth.

I couldn't see that we had much to lose except the paid up box rent at the post office in case of a fast move, or perhaps a few issues of the Reader's Digest in the event of a swift change of address.

Folks have been saying forever that ranching was such a risky game. Ranching isn't risky. Now, financing a ranch is risky, but the ranching itself is as safe as playing the egg market before Easter.

It's the investing of money in ranching that's the dangerous part. Las Vegas doesn't have a game that won't pay off without a rain. Those boys out there have some mighty fancy ideas to share with their customers, but they don't ask anyone to put up a load of money all winter for feed to bet on a next fall payoff.

I found that whistling helped me forget this drouth. Out at the ranch, I'd carry a coffee can full of water to moisten my lips. Along in late April, I could whistle the entire accompaniment to a Russian ballet without stopping. I wished I'd done that in the previous drouth. When that one was over, all I'd accumulated was a fruit jar full of arrowheads.

To say we are grateful to be out from under the first killing frost of '77 would be like the very Pope over in Rome saying he'd appreciate it if the Communists would stop trying to burn down the city. It's going to be good times from now on. But there wouldn't have been much whistling if it had stayed dry through June.